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MANY VOICES

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CHARLES
CARROLL
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D.D.

Many Voices

BY

Charles Carroll Albertson
D.D.

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Many Voices

Many Voices

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification." (I Corinthians xiv. 10.)

Among the phenomena that attended the Apostolic Church was one known as "the gift of tongues." Persons possessing this gift were moved to speak in language no one understood. It was a strange and mystifying thing. And it was so easily simulated that there is reason to believe it brought confusion into more than one society. Paul did not deny the genuineness of the gift, but he did not encourage it. In the chapter from which the text is taken he exhorts the Corinthian Christians to cultivate the more practical power of

interpreting the Scriptures. He argues that there is a twofold purpose in Christian speech,—to glorify God and to enlighten men. He says, in substance, "It is good to pray, but we must pray in words that others can understand in order that they may pray with us. It is good to praise God, but we must praise Him in the language of men that men may praise Him with us. It is good to teach, but we must teach in familiar terms or our teaching will be of no service to others."

It would seem unnecessary to give such advice to any church in any age. Yet it was necessary then. And even now the idea the Apostle sought to emphasize is by no means as generally accepted as it should be,—namely, that no spiritual gift is of much value except it add to our capacity to minister to our brethren. In this chapter Paul gives us his estimate of the relative value of spiritual gifts of a purely personal character and gifts which may be

employed for the edification of the Church and the improvement of the world. His ratio is five to ten thousand! Hear him: "I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

Yet Paul concedes that every tongue, every voice, every sound, however unknown and mysterious, has its use, its signification, its place in the economy of God's government. He speaks even more strongly than appears in our version. He says, "Even though there be an indefinite number of sounds in the world, yet none is wholly meaningless." And nowhere else does he reveal more unmistakably his mental grasp and greatness than here. He practically anticipates by sixteen hundred years the scientific method based upon the theory that every separate fact has relation to law, that the whole universe of forces, visible and invisible, organic and inorganic, pon-

derable and imponderable, is but the manifold expression of One Great Will.

It is a great step in one's mental development when he comes to understand that everything has a meaning, that nothing in nature or life is unrelated to an intelligent cause. This is the very beginning of the scientific spirit. We see it in the man watching the swinging chandelier at Pisa; in the Swiss spectacle-maker experimenting with the glasses of the first rude telescope; in the boy studying the pulsating lid of the tea-kettle on the fire; in the physician observing that the English dairy-maids who had contracted cow-pox were immune from small-pox. Others had observed these same facts, but had attached no significance to them. The inventors of the pendulum, the telescope, and the steam-engine, and the discoverer of vaccination by inoculation simply sought to find the meaning of familiar facts. The physical scientist is a kind of interpreter of signs. People used

to charge him with being in league with the devil. We now know he is in league with God. He is thinking God's thoughts after Him. He is interpreting God's speech to men.

What if you discover in root or bark or fruit or flower a remedy for some disease, a tonic, or an anodyne? Was that not God's thought first? You have simply found its signification. So if you discover in air or water or fire some element or combination of elements that may be utilized to lighten the burden of labor; or if you discover a new continent just at a time when the old world is overcrowded and the old social order is decadent, is not that God's thought, and have you not merely found its signification? Possibly the world does not sufficiently recognize the moral value of the services of those whose mission is to ascertain and publish to men the meaning of God's thoughts in nature. They are God's

servants, in a sense,—in a good sense, the servants of the race.

But in a higher sense are they God's interpreters who study the significance of that vast number of voices by which God speaks to the fancy and feelings of men. These are artists, poets, lovers of beauty, teachers of truth in the realm of sentiment.

This world would be a bleak and barren place if God had not put beauty into it, and if he had not created us with love for the beautiful. What if every sky were gray, and flowers the color of the soil from which they spring, and all speech were prose? But such is not God's world. He is the Master-Artist—He paints pictures on every sky. He puts music into every summer breeze, and every pine-tree in the forest, and every purling brook. There is no beauty of arch or dome or pinnacle which has not its antetype in cavern or sky or cloud-peak. The best the sculptor can do is to imitate the beauty of the form that

proceeded from the perfect thought of God. So he who says, "I care nothing for beauty," is saying, "I care nothing for God's thoughts," for *God thought beauty*, and the human artist is in no sense the creator of beauty,—he only finds the signification of nature's lines, nature's forms, nature's sounds and signs. And nature is a garment from God's loom.

The artist-soul, whether he be painter, architect, sculptor, poet, or musician, has no power save as an interpreter. He is on speaking terms with beauty. Most of us are not. He makes us acquainted. He cries, "Stars, flowers, earth, sky, sea! speak to men that they may hear and understand!" And they speak to him, and he speaks their message to us. Has nature no voice? She had for Bryant. Has the sea no voice? It had for Byron. Has the marsh no voice? It had for Sidney Lanier. Has a landscape no language? Emerson said of a certain view among the White

Mountains, "That always makes me pray."

There was One to whom all nature spoke; the lilies, of God's goodness; the sparrows, of God's providence; the fountain, of eternal life; the sun, of Him who is "the Father of Lights." To Jesus Christ every common thing of common life had some divine significance. His was a soul so sensitive that every sound broke upon it—sound of river and sea, sound of sorrow and sin—and instantly found interpretation as to its true meaning in the mind of God.

In the highest realm of all—the realm of the spirit—it was Jesus Christ who first taught the world the significance of a language which had been but imperfectly understood by others. He knew how the human heart craves assurance of God's Fatherhood. So, almost the first lesson He taught us was to say "Our Father." Neither Moses, David, nor Isaiah; neither

Homer, Socrates, nor Plato; neither Confucius, Buddha, nor Zoroaster had ever said anything quite so clear and comforting as that.

Jesus knew how the heart hungers for immortality; how, ever since Eve looked into the glazed eyes of her dead son, mothers have stood on the earth-shore of the river of death and strained their aching eyes and empty arms for a sight and a touch of some vanished form. So He said what left no shade of doubt as to the deathless life beyond. He knew also how the soul of sinful man yearns for some token of divine clemency, some availing word of mercy, some open way to pardon and to peace. So He spoke often of the Father's reconciled face, of the changeless purpose of the Eternal Heart to redeem His children, of the Throne of Grace and the Mercy Seat. Nay, more, He said, in spirit, "As you do not know how to approach the Mercy Seat, take My hand—I

will lead you. As you do not know how to pray, I will teach you. After this manner pray ye: Our Father." So, Jesus the man, knowing the significance of human tongues, Christ the God knowing how to interpret the divine voice, became the arbiter of two worlds,—Heaven's Ambassador and earth's High Priest.

There is an event in the life of our Lord which throws great light, by way of illustration, upon the presence in some minds and the absence from others of the faculty of interpreting spiritual sounds. It is towards the close of His ministry. Certain Greeks have come to Him for instruction. His discourse ends in prayer. [It is difficult to say just where the discourse ends and where the prayer begins.] The prayer ends, and a voice from the excellent glory is heard. It is the same that spoke at the baptism. Jesus hears it. John hears it,—it is he who gives us

the record of the circumstance. Others who are in sympathy with Christ's ideas hear it, but many hear only a noise. They say, "It thundered."

Let a man with no musical taste, no musical training, hear a great orchestral composition. However perfectly it may be rendered, he hears only the noise of the instruments. Let another hear it, and he goes away with noble thoughts awakened and deep emotions stirred. The music merely thunders to one. It speaks to the other. It is a matter of preparation, sympathy, sensitiveness.

To the unspiritual mind the Bible is a confused chorus of discordant voices, dissonant tones, unmusical sounds, lacking unity, lacking consistency, lacking meaning. But to the reverent reader the Bible speaks. Its tones are manifold, but they never lack signification. Sometimes it speaks warningly, sometimes it entreats, sometimes it wooes with sweetness of con-

solation. It is the old story of the Pillar, —whether of fire or cloud depends upon our view-point.

To worldly eyes the sacrament of the Lord's Supper appears a sentimental ceremony of merely human origin. To the humble, penitent, confessing disciple it appears what it is,—a Communion, a tryst with Jesus the Lord, a contact with the heart of the Eternal, and such a communicant rises from the altar as one rises from his bed, refreshed; as one rises from a banquet, nourished; as one rises from a fountain, cleansed. This line of cleavage separates the natural from the spiritual man at every point where the Kingdom of God touches human life.

There are innumerable facts of experience to which the thoughtless attach no meaning but which Christians are taught to interpret spiritually. Conscience, Duty, Inward Unrest, "Immortal Hunger," Prayer,—what signification do you give

to these? This yearning for a fellowship not of time, this heart-homesickness, does it not point to God? Is not God the eternal answer to the spirit of man? Is not Christ the answer to sin? Is not immortality the answer to death, and heaven the answer to earth? If so, then

"Life's not blot to us, nor blank;
It means intensely and means good:
To find its meaning is our meat and drink."

Whithersoever the River Cometh

Whithersoever the River Cometh

"And everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh." (Ezekiel xlvii. 9.)

Ezekiel was a seer, hence a prophet. No man can teach who has not clear vision of truth. This prophet had both insight and farsight. He forth-told and fore-told. He had the divine perspective.

There is no Future with God. He fills all time. Now and then are one with Him. Time present and time to come are an eternal now. All that shall be is, in God's sight, and in their sight whose eyes God's fingers touch to prophecy.

Here is the vision of Ezekiel, the "Vision of the Waters," as it is known. A stately picture it is, a perfect work of

poet's art. No vision of Dante or Milton or Bunyan or Tennyson approaches it in unadorned simplicity. He sees a river flowing by the altars of the House of God; a stream that grows wider and deeper as it nears the sea; a river fringed with green; and where it flows it brings beauty and bounty. It fructifies the barren land and freshens the salt sea, and fails not forever.

Doubtless the figure means more to the Eastern world than to us. Where deserts abound, where the sun shines with tropic heat, where even the breezes are like blasts from a furnace, living water is a luxury the worth of which we do not understand. So, as the Holy Scriptures came to us out of the East, as God chose to reveal His truth to us in Oriental tongues, Biblical symbolism is full of references to springs, fountains, wells, and rivers. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." "With joy shall ye

draw water out of the wells of salvation." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass." This figure was in Jesus' mind when He said to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, "Whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." And it was in his mind who closed the canon on Patmos, "Let him that is athirst come." Who shall say that this very vision of Ezekiel was not in his mind when he saw the "river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb"? The river Ezekiel saw and the river John saw are the same. The prophet saw it from the earthward side, the apostle from the heavenly.

From the shore of earth let us survey the river that flows out from "the threshold of the house" of God. It is the river of grace and truth. It had its source at Bethlehem. It was only a brooklet then,

so small that the ruthless footstep of a Roman governor might have changed its course—and would have changed its course but for the fact that it was dear to God. It seemed to end on Calvary, like the "Lost River" of Arizona, which flows a few miles and disappears from sight. But from the empty sepulchre in Joseph's garden it burst again, as burst the stream from smitten rock at Kadesh. It grew to great proportions at Pentecost. It widened immeasurably as it reached the Gentile world. It touched Europe at Philippi and Rome. Henceforth it was to be the broadest, deepest stream of history. There is no continent in which it does not flow, hardly a nation it does not bless. And it has been true from its beginning until now,—everything lives whithersoever it cometh. The wilderness and the solitary place are made glad. The desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. The parched ground has become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.

Dropping figurative speech, let us recall some of the historic and practical results of Christianity, a few of the manifold blessings that accompany the Gospel. There are some things which live only where Christianity lives,—some institutions which flourish, some ideas which prevail, some virtues which are practised, only where Christian truth is hid in human hearts.

In the broadest possible view of the moral influence of Christianity we see that philanthropy—the love of man for man, the disinterested, benevolent love of man for his kind—is one of the peculiar fruits of the Gospel. There are other religions which teach respect for the lower orders of life. In the estimation of many Hindus, the cow is a sacred animal. Cats and crocodiles were objects of veneration in Egypt. But neither in India nor in Egypt was human life a sacred thing until the Light of the World dawned

upon the darkness of Asia and the Gospel of the Son of Man supplanted the worship of Isis and Osiris.

The doctrine of the unity of the race may have been dimly perceived, but it was never plainly discerned and forcefully taught until the Man of Galilee made it one of the very fundamental postulates of his new social and moral system. The missionary idea is founded upon the assumption that all men are brothers. Judaism was for the Hebrew, Hinduism for the Oriental, Confucianism for the Chinese, but Christianity for Man. Jesus Christ was the first cosmopolitan, the contemporary of every age, the comrade of every soul. To Christian philanthropy we owe the inspiration of all the great world-movements of our age, by which bars of iron and gates of brass are beaten down, and nations begin to see the essential oneness of the race. Of none other than Jesus

of Nazareth could she have learned the lesson of her noble poem who wrote:

"I was born as free as the silver light
That laughs in a Southern fountain;
Free as the sea-fed bird that nests
On a Scandinavian mountain;
Free as the wind that mocks at the sway
And pinioning clasp of another,
Yet in the slave they scourged to-day
I saw and knew my brother!

"Vested in purple, I sat apart,
But the cord that smote him bruised me;
I closed my ears, but the sobs that broke
From his savage breast accused me;
No phrase of reasoning judgment just
The plaint of my soul could smother,—
A creature vile, abased to the dust,
I knew him still—my brother!

"And the autumn day that had smiled so fair
Seemed suddenly overclouded;
A gloom more dreadful than nature owns
My human mind enshrouded.

I thought of the power benign that made
And bound men one to the other,
And I felt in my brother's fear afraid,
And ashamed in the shame of my brother."

This idea of brotherhood lives "whithersoever the river cometh;" and because it lives certain other ideas grow out of it, among them, Democracy. There has never been a true democracy that was not Christian in conception and inspiration. The nearest approach to it in pre-Christian times was the theocratic commonwealth of Israel. There were elements of democracy under Moses, Joshua, and the judges, but the commonwealth gave way to a monarchy because the people were not prepared for it; it disintegrated, lacking the principle of unity, and this it lacked because the world was yet to learn the lesson of brotherhood.

There was a so-called democracy in Athens, but it was only a privileged

oligarchy, for two-thirds of its people were the property of the other third. Democracy is a comparatively modern development, and its great victories have been achieved among people who derived their inspiration from Christian sources. Thrilling is the story of the struggle for liberty in Germany and Holland, in England and America—Christian nations and Protestant. The anarchism of Italy, the nihilism of Russia, and the communism of France are simply suppressed democracy. Suppress steam and superheat it and destruction follows. Govern it and give it vent, and you have motion, progress, wealth. Democracy is the political destiny of the world. There is but one absolute monarchy left in Europe (Turkey considered an Asiatic power), and not one in all the Western hemisphere. Japan is a constitutional monarchy. India is in the hands of England. China will not remain a despotism after her dismember-

ment. South Africa is free. Democracy is in the air. The river flows through all the earth, and liberty lives "whithersoever the river cometh."

It is needless to do more than just suggest that charity—systematic charity as distinguished from mere impulsive generosity; organized charity, which is the only effective charity, being at once prophylactic and curative—is among the fruits of Christianity. It is said there was but one hospital in all the world at the beginning of the Christian era, and that was for wounded gladiators, where they might be nursed back to strength to fight again. Whose are the hospitals on every modern city street? They bear a great variety of names,—Methodist, Presbyterian, Good Samaritan, St. Joseph's, but they are all Christ's hospitals. He taught the world a new pity for pain, a new sympathy for suffering, a new care for the distressed. And so it is of Orphans' Homes and

Midnight Missions and Juvenile Reformatories. So it is of all the "charities that soothe and heal and bless." They are the trees of fruit and shade that rim the river which issues from the House of God.

See also how the humanities, education and art, "the liberal offices of life," the agencies that broaden and adorn the mind of man, are among the things that accompany the Gospel in its flow among the nations. The great universities of the world have had their founders in men of faith. When the president of one of America's greatest colleges was asked to select the sentiments to be inscribed upon the peristyle at the Columbian Exposition, he chose the words of Jesus Christ for one,—"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Go to the new Congressional Library at Washington and you will find that saying inscribed upon one of its walls. Does it not suggest the intimate relation between the

truth-seeking or truth-loving spirit of our religion and the passion for truth characteristic of the age?

The immortal masters of painting have exalted Christ and Christian themes. Poetry and music flourish best when they deal with inspiration's greatest thoughts, the doctrines of revelation, the sacred mysteries that elevate the mind whithersoever the river of God's Word floweth.

But art is not life. Men may live without art, but they cannot live and be men without love and conscience and character. These make life. They *are* life. Friendship, domestic fidelity, social righteousness, integrity of conscience, purity of personal character,—these are the very essence of practical Christianity. The Christian family exists as a little republic, in which each member governs himself with reference to the rights of the others: the husband loving the wife as

his own body; the wife honoring the husband; children obeying their parents in the Lord; parents provoking not their children to wrath. He who setteth the solitary in families ordains that even humble homes may be hallowed by the perpetual presence of the spirit of His Son. Have you not read much in the New Testament of the church that is in the household? Picture to yourselves the ideal home, blessed with all peace, and sympathy, and chivalry, and mutual confidence. Can it be otherwise in the home of which Christ is the acknowledged Head, —where He sits at every table, guides every conversation, sanctifies every sorrow, spiritualizes every joy? It makes a vast difference in a home whether Christ is there. Everything gentle and noble and sweet lives whithersoever He cometh.

But the basis of all Christian virtue, manifesting itself in every field of thought and conduct, affecting life in its largest

or in its more limited relations, is the work of God's grace in the soul of the individual. The Spirit-filled believer is the unit of power, static and active. The world is moved only as I am moved. The re-creation of the race begins when I take my first step toward God. All things begin to be made new when I open my heart to the inflow of His love. Is it not wonderful that the river of God's saving power flows so close to every soul that one act of the human will may open every plain of life to its incoming? One prayer, one sigh, one act of self-surrender, and the vital and vitalizing current sweeps in and lifts us up to the level of eternal life.

With the entrance of God's grace into our hearts some things begin to die and other things to live. The things that die are the things that ought to die. The things that live are the things that must live and grow in us if we would know how well worth living life may be if hid with Christ in God.

The Everlasting God

The Everlasting God

"From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Psalm xc. 2.)

Moses wrote this psalm. And so, chronologically, it belongs to the earliest literature of the Bible. It would not be out of place in the book of Genesis; it might properly have been made the first chapter of the Bible,—a kind of foreword. But as it was a hymn, set to music, and sung in the Temple service at Jerusalem, it is included in the Hebrew Hymnal. Our book of Psalms was the Jewish hymn-book.

When Moses wrote this psalm we do not know. It would be interesting to know, —whether amidst the luxuries of Pharaoh's palace, in sight of the temples of Egypt's

gods, or among the meadows of Midian as he watched the flocks of Jethro; whether in the wilderness of wandering, having passed Sinai and Marah, or while they abode at Kadesh, the turning-point of the nation's history, or whether in the valley, before he was led up to Nebo to look across to Canaan, and to die with the kiss of God upon his lips.

We have only internal evidence as to the date of this composition. From the character of the psalm it is not likely Moses wrote it while he was in Egypt. No man whose life lay in the lap of luxury ever wrote a poem like this. Neither was it written in Midian. It is not a pastoral poem; a shepherd's life is too serene to inspire such a song. Neither is it a young man's song. It is an old man's prayer, a pilgrim's hymn. Miriam is dead. Aaron is dead. The pilgrim is left alone, bereft. He knows he is nearing the end of his journey; he thinks of all the way he has

been led. Israel's history, like a panorama, passes before him. He thinks of other nations and their history. The glory of Egypt is fading. Babylon is changing masters. Empires are rising and falling; kings are being crowned and being buried. The world is like a kaleidoscope,—at every turn new combinations are formed and new pictures presented. The psalmist asks himself, "Is there nothing permanent, nothing that does not change with time?" He thinks of God. He thinks, "Amidst all that is transient there is the Eternal. Amidst the fluctuating there is the fixed. There is something the mind can rest on, the heart can trust in, the life can build on." Then he writes, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."

Wherever this psalm was written, whenever, and by whomsoever, it is the song of a swimmer in the sea who has found land. It looked like an island at first, but he

discovers it is a continent. It is the song of a builder who has penetrated soil and sub-soil and clay and has come to the granite. Doubt not he had been digging deeply before he found this rock. How far back into the past he must have looked when he spoke of "all generations!" Back of his own personal history, the weary march, the sea, the plagues, the burning-bush, the slavery in Egypt, was Joseph; God had been his refuge. Back of Joseph, the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; God had been their refuge. Back of Abraham, Noah; God was his refuge. Back of Noah, Enoch, who had his dwelling-place in God. Back of the first man to breathe the breath of life, creation, and back of creation, the Eternal Mind, which foresaw the whole world-drama from time's beginning to time's end. Out of some such spiritual vision came the inspiration of this psalm and this text. This psalm! Grand and simple; deep

in feeling and high in conception, true in its portraiture of human life, and lofty in its representation of the Infinite; serious yet hopeful; mournful yet trustful, without imitation or quotation, older than Greek ode or Persian epigram, it is the message of a man of God; it is a message from God.

There is a time in our lives when novelty and variety attract us. We weary of the old and court the new. Youth is that time. Restless, roving, in quest of happiness or power, we forsake old paths and exult in our new freedom. But as the years go by and age comes on, we travel back to the old scenes and kiss the very sod our youthful feet pressed, and walk along the streams where we once gathered flowers with something of the gladness with which the ransomed walk beside the river of life. It is the same sod, yet not the same,—it is furrowed with graves; it is the same brook, yet not the same,—it images not the same

faces as of yore. Nothing is much more pathetic than the return of a man to his early home at sixty or seventy years of age. It is the tragedy of the mountain sleeper over again when he cries out, "Is there nobody that remembers me?"

Mountains are the most nearly unchangeable things on earth. This explains much of the imagery of the Bible. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people." And yet even mountains wear away. The elements are at war with the mountains, and in time their conformation is altered and their altitude diminished. Volcanic forces are at work in Martinique building up a new cone for Mont Pelée. Great glaciers move down the slopes of Alpine and Alaskan mountains, reminding us that even mountains are not perpetual. Are the stars more durable? Job sang of Orion and Arcturus and the Pleiades. Surely they have not changed?

Have they not? Have you not heard of the worn-out worlds of space, of extinguished suns? The celestial bodies are so shifting that there was a time when Thuban in Draco was our pole-star, and there will be a time when Alpha Lyra will be our pole-star. In 1876 a new star blazed out in Cygnus, rose to the third magnitude, and then disappeared. Another such phenomenon occurred in the constellation of the Northern Crown in 1866. Probably those stars were suns, with planets depending upon them for heat and light. Something happened, some eruption or collision, which caused them to shine with a thousand times their ordinary brilliance. What would happen to our planet if our sun should suddenly increase its heat a thousand-fold? Not a sign of life would survive a minute! Is that to be the history of this planet, this solar system? It is enough to know that whether we look at mountain or star, at earth or sky, noth-

ing our eyes rest upon is " from everlasting to everlasting." " Change and decay in all around I see."

But little would it comfort us to know that mountains or stars are immutable since human life lacks so much of permanence. " The days of our years are threescore years and ten." What if they be fourscore? " Are they not all labor and sorrow? We are soon cut off, and fly away." Where are the friends of yesterday? Not many are left to us. Some are sleeping under the fallen leaves, and some have ceased to be friends. The bitterest tragedy is in the fact that friendship pales and fades. We say, " Let mountains wear away, let stars grow dim, if only our friends remain our friends." But they do not. We change, they change, and when next we meet, the hand-clasp is less warm, the greeting less cordial. We often outgrow our friendships. We change our point of view, our angle of vision, or they

do, and then follow avoidance, estrangement. When we survey all this,—that nothing our eyes see or our hands touch is secure from mutability,—it gives us a heart-famine for the abiding. Moses felt this hunger, and found its appeasement in God. For us there is a table spread in the wilderness; for us there is an overflowing cup, and it is here, "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Is this not cold water to thirsty souls? Is this not the very bread of Life?

It was a new note in the music of the world, three and a half millenniums ago when Moses smote this chord and sang this song. The world was full of fear of heathen gods and goddesses. Bel, Istar, Moloch, creatures of mere caprice, subject to fits of wrath, to sudden and violent passions. Greek and Roman divinities were pictured as making war on each other and on men, as having favorites among themselves and among

mortals. Jupiter was only a monstrous Cæsar, Jove an omnipotent tyrant. Over against these conceptions of the gods is the revelation of one God, pure and holy, good and kind, sovereign but not arbitrary, "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy," everywhere and always the same, changeless from eternity to eternity. If this be God, our God, what follows? If ever God loved man, He loves man now. If ever He loved us, He loves us now. So, if sorrow comes into our lives, it is not because God has ceased to love us. If losses come, it is not because He has forgotten us. If all the world seems like a house unroofed, and the torrents beat upon our unprotected heads, it is not because God has turned His face from us. His is a friendship we cannot outgrow. His is a providence time cannot alter. His is a care death cannot defeat. That man was right who wrote upon his weather-

vane, "God is Love," and explained that he put the motto there not because God's love is fickle as the weather, but because, whichever way the wind blows, He is Love.

A right conception of the changeless character of God will teach us patience in the midst of trial. It will teach us to imitate Him by striving for that constant heart for which the Psalmist prayed, that steadfastness and immovability to which an apostle exhorts us, "Holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering." We will not be driven from discipleship by ill-usage, nor allured from it by the subtle flattery of the world. Faith in the changeless will of God will give us perfect confidence in His government. The fitful changes of the world are controlled by Him. It will teach us to realize the consolation of His promises. We who trust in Him cannot be disappointed. We who confide in Him cannot be endangered; we who fight for Him

cannot be defeated. It were well for us in the light of this text to read anew the words, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

What was Jesus Christ yesterday? The Friend of sinners, the Comforter of sorrow, the Saviour of the penitent, the Conqueror of death. What was He to Mary Magdalene? He opened the gates of new life to her. What was He to John on Patmos? Companion in exile, and Compensation for all pain. What was He to John Bunyan in Bedford Jail? To William Penn in London Tower? To Madame Guyon in prison? Freedom, boundless horizon, unfettered thought, and hope. Hear the prisoner sing:

"A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him Who placed me there.
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee."

What was Jesus Christ to John Wesley in persecution? Peace, perfect peace. What was He to William Carey and Melville Cox? Heaven on earth even in the heart of heathen darkness. What was He to Alfred Cookman, dying? Opened gates of glory, victory by the blood of the Lamb. All this was yesterday. We are of to-day. He is still the same. Nor shall time deflect His purpose or decrease His power. He is from "everlasting to everlasting" God. "The Eternal God is our Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Elijah the Reformer

Elijah the Reformer

"And Elijah said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand." (I Kings xvii. 1.)

The character of Elijah is rugged, majestic, colossal. He is the reformer of his age. The brightest pages of human history tell of lives like his: Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, Nehemiah in Jerusalem, John the Baptist in Judea, Chrysostom in Constantinople, Savonarola in Florence, Luther in Germany, Knox in Scotland, Wesley in England. All of these began their work, as Elijah began his, by establishing in the minds of men just conceptions of the character of God. Hear him before Ahab—Ahab, idolater and polytheist,—"As the Lord God

of Israel liveth." Israel's God, the living God, is not in Ahab's pantheon of gods, but Elijah will put Him there, will set up His name, and if Ahab can only be made to see what God this is, he will renounce all other gods and cast them out.

And this is the first fact in the consciousness of the reformer, personal accountability to God. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, *before Whom I stand.*" A great American statesman, the greatest orator since Demosthenes, once said, "The greatest thought of which I have any conception is that of my personal responsibility to the Almighty." There can be no greater thought than this in its bearing upon human conduct. Those who have accomplished most for the race have lived in the atmosphere created by that sense of inalienable accountability. The reflection, "I stand before God," lays bare the primary impulse of the reformer, his intense motive and purpose. It ex-

plains his courage. Elijah stands before Ahab, but he sees God more plainly than he sees Ahab. Because of this fact it is Ahab standing before Elijah, just as nine centuries later it was not Christ standing before Pilate but Pilate standing before Christ. Pilate was on trial, not Christ. Ahab was on trial, not Elijah. If it seem a small thing to you for Elijah to confront Ahab thus, remember who Ahab was,—" proudest and fiercest spirit of that old age of tyranny," cruel, conscienceless, absolute, with a woman at his side as much more ambitious than he, as Lady Macbeth was more ambitious than Macbeth. Few men rise to heights of heroism or holiness without the help of some good woman; few men sell their souls to sin for any price, unprompted by some bad woman. So here are Ahab and Jezebel. Consider them as to their power, their prestige. Then consider who it is that rebukes them, thwarts their designs, defeats their pur-

poses, predicts their downfall: an absolutely unknown man.

Elijah appears upon the scene without introduction. No one vouches for him. His lineage is unknown. His parentage is unheralded, and that among a people and in an age that made more of genealogy than modern Philadelphians do. What race is so careful to keep ancestral records as were the Jews? His province and his town are known, but they are not favorable to him. Gilead was a wild and lawless country, much like the feud counties of Kentucky in our day. Unlikely place to produce a prophet. Yet God is fond of such anomalies. Out of the wilderness came the herald of the Christ, and out of Galilee came He whom the love and faith of ages have crowned the King of Saints. Joan of Arc was a peasant girl, yet she drove the English out of France. Martin Luther was a miner's son, yet he lighted a fire in Germany which yet blazes

throughout Christendom. Abraham Lincoln was a child of bitter poverty, yet he was the man of destiny to the Union. Many a precious pearl is hidden in an unlovely shell, and many a white flower springs from the blackest soil. When God has a great work to do, a work which only a great man can do, it is His way to take a man out of obscurity and solitude. He vouches for His man. He assumes that man's paternity. The supernatural is that man's credential.

When Charles Stuart asked the officer who came to arrest him, "Where is your warrant?" the officer pointed through the window to the street, in which stood regiments of soldiers. "There is my warrant, sir." Charles looked and saw, and said, "It is writ large." Ahab did not challenge Elijah; he saw the warrant "writ large." Some men need no badge of their authority. Jesus needed none. When he drove the mercenaries from the temple no

man dared ask Him for His warrant. Sidney Smith said of a certain member of Parliament, "The Ten Commandments are written on his face." He was the very embodiment of righteousness. Elijah was such a man,—shaggy, uncouth, clad in coarse raiment, about his shoulders a mantle of camel's skin, yet was his face radiant from fellowship with God, yet were his eyes bright with unveiled vision of the truth. Is he not what some historian called Napoleon,—"grand, gloomy, and peculiar"? Grand, always grand, absolutely dignified. No mountebank. More kingly than the king himself. Gloomy, once plunged into abysmal melancholy by temporary eclipse of faith, once despondent, to prove that he was a man of like passions with us. Peculiar in that good sense in which the apostle speaks of Christians as "a royal priesthood, a peculiar people."

If ever a man should rise to call him-

self Elijah, to claim to be a reincarnation of Elijah the Reformer, it is not necessary to dispute his claim. Mere argument is thrown away. Just institute a comparison. Look at the original, and then at the copy. *See if the mantle fits.* Here is the portrait of Elijah, clear as an Italian cameo. Observe his features. Notice his intense spirituality. God is the circumference of his circle, at once the circumference and the centre. God is his surest fact. Ahab and Jezebel are but small motes dancing in the sunshine. The royal court is a shadow. The palace is a cobweb. Beyond the palace are the mountains of Gilead. They have spoken to Elijah of God. Above the mountains are the stars. They have declared to Elijah the glory of God. God has become the most intimate and the most extensive reality in his consciousness. And in conscious co-operation with God the world becomes a little thing.

If we lack anything to make us spiritual it is this,—the clear apprehension of God as the most indubitable reality. We need not so much the sense of sin as the sense of God. All the other facts of life will take their proper places when we grasp this in its relations. Amiel had hold of this fact—Amiel, that quiet, lonely, lovely Swiss professor at Geneva, whose journal Mrs. Humphrey Ward has translated for us—when he said, "What I desire is the sum of all desires, and what I seek to know is the sum of all knowledge. Always the Complete, the Absolute, the Infinite, *teres atque rotundum*. . . . There is no repose for the mind except in the Absolute; for feeling except in the Infinite; for the soul except in the Divine; nothing finite is true, is interesting, is worthy to fix my attention. . . . Religion for me is to live and die in God, in complete abandonment to the holy Will, which is at the root of nature and destiny." Lanier had this fact when he wrote:

As the marsh-hen secretly builds her a nest in the watery sod,
Behold, I will build me a nest in the greatness of God.
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the earth and the skies."

Notice also Elijah's sweet humility. He claims no power of his own, arrogates no credit to himself. He organizes no triumphal procession. He covets neither garland nor crown. He is simply God's servant, God's messenger, and in the hour of his greatest victory, on Mount Carmel, he retires into the shadow, that it may be all the more apparent that the excellency of the power is of God and not of man. He asks no recognition for himself. He builds no palace, makes provision for no perpetuation of his office. If he looks for a successor, it is not to Gilead among his kinsmen, but to the school of the prophets,

to Elisha, who seems most fit to be the people's leader and God's mouth-piece.

Beautiful is the reformer's tenderness. Beneath that rough exterior is a heart of melting sympathy. He ministers to the distress of a poor widow. He restores to the arms of his mother a dead son. He cleaves with fatherly solicitude to Elisha. Standing upon the rim of Jordan, waiting for the chariot that is to take him home, he says to Elisha, " Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken away." It is not strange Elisha thought of him as his father. Elijah was the father of the best part of Elisha. And now the prophet ascends to God. He yields to the gravitation of that world with which, by contemplation, he is familiar, that world where are his treasures, and time and sense are for him no more.

Nine hundred years pass. Christ has come. It is on Tabor or Hermon. Christ is transfigured. There are with Him two

men once of earth, Moses and Elijah. They have a part in the fulfillment of redemption's plan. They are there to witness that the testimony of prophecy is the Spirit of Jesus. They were Christians before Christ. We are Christians after Christ. But in Christ we who are saved under grace, and they who were saved under the law, meet in the fellowship of saints, in the love of "the Lord's appearing."

A Large Place

A Large Place

"He brought me forth into a large place." (Psalm xviii. 19.)

Some one asked the chaplain of George IV. if he felt no fear when preaching to royalty, and the good man replied, "I forget that there are princes before me and remember only that there are souls to instruct in godliness." The author of this psalm forgot that he was a king when he wrote these verses, and remembered only that he was a soul, that he had been helped, and by Whom he had been helped.

There are three singular facts about this psalm. It occurs twice in the Holy Scriptures, once in II Samuel and once in the Psalter. It contains two verses quoted in the New Testament, one in Romans and

the other in Hebrews. These verses are ascribed to Christ, as they appear in the New Testament, so we may believe that it is something more than a psalm of David, —that King David's Lord speaks through it.

But here, at the nineteenth verse, it is a human soul speaking. He is rehearsing the many mercies of the Lord. He has just said, "He delivered me from my strong enemy. He drew me out of many waters. He was my stay." You know what a stay is in building. It is a prop. As applied to persons, a stay is a stand-by, and the Greek for stand-by is "Paraclete," and we translate it "Comforter" or "Advocate." "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." So the Psalmist says, "The Lord was my Advocate." Now follows the text,—"He brought me forth into a large place." And this is not the least precious fact here adverted to, by any means.

A LARGE PLACE

David was born in a small place, moved in a small circle until the Lord led him out. Not at once was he led into a large place. He mounted to the throne by way of many a hardship and many a battle. It was so with Joseph. He reached the palace by way of the prison. But he came to the large place in time, as did Abraham before him. Ur of the Chaldees was a small place. Abraham had no outlook there, but he found a large place in Canaan, a large place on earth, and a large place in history. Even so Moses was led. Egypt was a small place,—not small in extent of dominion, nor in its power among the nations of the world,—but its horizon was small. The palace is a poor place for a prophet. Better the desert. Better the meadows of Midian. Better the mountains of Moab. Better the wandering through the wilderness. Better the Sinai of law, the Nebo of glory.

A LARGE PLACE

This has been the song of all God's servants in every age,—"He brought me forth into a large place." Obedience to God never contracts our powers. Christ does not lead men backward, but onward, outward, upward. Matthew was led into a large place when he left the toll-booth to follow Jesus. Peter had never seen anything larger than the Sea of Galilee until Jesus made him a fisher of men. Paul at his best was only a theological hair-splitter, a heresy-hunter, until Christ appeared to him and filled his heart with a passion for the preaching of the Gospel and the glory of the cross. If the voice of Patriarch and Prophet and Apostle could be heard to-day it would cry, "Never say 'No' to God. If He call thee, go. He will lead thee into a large place."

No experience is more common to the most of us than a certain contempt for the littleness of the things by which we

are compelled to live. We are crowded and hemmed in by our circumstances. We are painfully limited. The farm boy who leaves the country goes to the city to seek a more abundant life. He dreams the city calls him to large enterprises. He does not know how cramped are the lodgings of most dwellers in the city, how small a part of it he will occupy, how easily the solitary individual is lost in the crowd. James A. Garfield heard the call of the sea when he was a lad, and only the love of a widowed mother kept him from following a seafaring life. Why is the sea so attractive to many? Because of its bounty, its unmeasured space. It is a touching fact that at the end of his life at Elberon, the eyes of the dying President rested lovingly, longingly, on the sea. Mr. Blaine suggests, in his Eulogy, that then his friend "heard the great waves breaking on the farther shore and felt upon his wasted brow the breath of the eternal morning."

Thomas Marshall, of Kentucky, a man of genius and power, expressed his desire to be buried in an open field and not in a crowded cemetery. "I have been crowded all my life," he said, "give me room for my grave." If one who has led a life of intense activity and great prominence feels this sense of limitation, is it strange that others are dissatisfied, whose ordinary lives are best symbolized by "one raindrop falling on moor, or meadow, or mountain, one flake of snow melting into the immeasurable deep."

I have heard a young lawyer say, "When I was in college I had great ambitions. I planned to make myself an authority on international law, but now that I am out I am compelled to try mean little cases before mean little juries." He had not found the large place he sought. The youth who would be a painter must be a clerk, and the man with an artist's soul is selling tea

and coffee. Longfellow tells us of one "whom nature made a poet but whom Destiny made a schoolmaster." We cannot map out our orbit as we would. We crave largeness. Our faculties seem fitted for a greater sphere than that in which we move. Literature is full of the expression of this fact. "Songs of Unrest" would fill volumes. Who of us busy daily with little vexatious problems would not prefer to deal with great ones? Who of us fighting battles daily which only God can see would not prefer to fight an epoch-making battle? It is the insignificance of our lives that frets us. So, whatever enlarges life in any right direction is a benefaction.

Blessed is imagination, which expands the walls and lifts the low roof of life, and fills it with dreams of what might have been and of what may be. Blessed is travel, for it enlarges the horizon of the traveller if he be a close observer. It is a distinct step in one's mental develop-

ment when he first acquaints himself with the language and customs of another country than his own. It is an old saying, "A man is as many men as he can speak languages." I know a German shoemaker who speaks nine languages, and he has acquired them by travelling through foreign lands. He goes abroad every year or two, tramps through the country he visits, lives the life of the people, and then comes back to his little shop to cobble and to live over in memory the scenes of his now numerous pilgrimages. Blessed is literature, for it broadens life. To most of us time to travel is denied. But books are not denied us,—books of travel, of history, of science, of fiction. A late writer advises us to read that fiction which portrays life as different as possible from our own. We hardly need that counsel. A certain instinct guides us in that direction. Dissatisfaction with the limitations of our lives impels us to read stories of soldiers

and knights and heroes and heroic deeds. Far-off ages and far-off civilizations attract us. We broaden our lives by changing our view-point. Blessed is everything that tends to widen our sympathies and give us the consciousness of new relations. Blessed is the religion that takes us out of ourselves, makes us superior to our limitations, creates a new world for us. Supremely blessed is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for of all religions that the world has seen it offers its disciples the most abundant life.

The distinctive glory of Christianity is its expansive spirit. The key-note of it is the greatest possible development of the individual. It aims to make every man a king, every heart the throne of the Eternal, every life a consecrated temple. "The humblest life that lives may be divine." It is a great undertaking, and it is unique in Christianity. Confucius never taught it. There is nothing in Confucianism to lead

the individual soul to greatness. Prudential maxims and conventional morality may make a man a better machine, but they do not increase his spiritual resources. Buddha taught the extinguishment of the individual. Epictetus taught the suppression of emotion, the denial of desire. Christ's doctrine is, Diminish nothing that is right; repress nothing that may be turned to good; do not diminish your interests, but multiply them; live the largest possible life; conquer your sorrows by making the sorrows of others your care; master your desires by giving them a new direction; extend life on every side. Is not this the Master's teaching? Is it not the uniform testimony of experience that Christian discipleship leads every faithful soul into a large place? It is sin that narrows life, clips the wings with which the spirit would soar to lofty heights. Hence the conquest of sin by grace is like the liberation of a slave. Fetters fall off.

Iron doors and brazen gates are torn asunder, and the captive moves out into God's universe to learn how life enlarges with each new step in grace.

There is a song which says,—

> "Could we but stand where Moses stood
> And view the landscape o'er."

Why, we can stand there; we do stand there! Our view-point is from the side of Jesus Christ. We have His perspective. We see things as He sees them. So things are not what they seem. Life and death, time and duty, sorrow and pain are transfigured, and history sweeps on towards that "far-off divine event" when "all things shall be made new." Christ wants us to see, to hear, to think, to feel, to act, in view of infinite relations. He wants us to know that selfishness turns life into a squirrel-cage; that envy, greed, falsehood, cruelty, base appetites imprison men, make life small, and that the spirit of holi-

ness extends all the boundaries of the inner man. Remember this; for the idea prevails among some that Christianity limits life, except in the direction of the future. The fact is there is nothing else that so expands it. Not imagination, not travel, not literature, not all other things combined. God never calls us to impoverishment or isolation, but always to enrichment and fellowship with the spirits of just men made perfect.

Christ was always calling men,—Philip, Nathanael, the rich young ruler, Zacchæus, Bartimeus, Lazarus, Nicodemus. Did any one of them follow Him and fail to find the meaning of abundant life? Did any one of them turn back who did not turn away from glory and honor and immortality? Years ago I knew a life that was transformed and led into a large place and made fruitful in abundant measure, and the memory of it lingers in my mind like a benediction. A common plough-boy

heard somewhere of the Great Teacher, who made peasants and fishermen His disciples and let them share His kingly thoughts. As he walked behind the plough, he said to himself, "I would like to live a larger life; I would like to feel the uplift of great ideas. If the Teacher will take me I will learn of Him." From that hour he was a scholar in the school of Christ. He found the Master meek and lowly of heart, and not at all like some teachers who have no time to spend with beginners. Almost before he knew it the boy began to think differently of nature, of people, of all God's creatures. He found himself growing more patient and humane, more studious and reverent, richer in affection and keener in his interest in everything that concerned the welfare of the world. There was no sudden spasm of emotion, but a gradual breaking away from old conditions, a gradual ascension Godward. He thought of that Young

Man who suffered Himself to be baptized that He might leave nothing of righteousness unfulfilled, and he was baptized. He thought of another, who said, "I am debtor both to the Jew and Greek," and he said, "I, too, am a debtor to the world." So he began to converse with people about the sweet reasonableness of Christianity. He had a word for other plough-boys, and a whole community began to feel the impulse of his words and work. He never entered the ministry, but his life was a continual ministry. From the farm he went into the halls of the Legislature of his State, and from there to the governorship, and from there the God Who spoke to him as he followed the plough called him to pass "through the gates into the City." Such a life was that of the late Governor Mount, of Indiana, upon whose tomb may well be written,—"He led me forth into a large place."

This is what God wants to do for all

of us. Young man, you cannot be so ambitious for yourself as He is for you. Not that He makes all His servants leaders in the State, but He makes us princes of a royal line, companions of apostles, comrades of the saints, followers in the kingly train of the conquering Christ.

If Thou Faint

If Thou Faint

"If thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small." (Prov. xxiv. 10.)

This proverb assumes adversity to be a part of the common experience of life. The author of Ecclesiastes may have been a pessimist, but he told an universal truth when he said, "If a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." Not to Christians alone do the words of Jesus apply,—"In the world ye shall have tribulation." It is well to know this in the beginning; it will prevent many painful surprises and innumerable disappointments.

It is no kindness to a child never to let him see the harder lines of life, to keep him

ignorant of the seamy side of things. There is nothing much more pitiable than the sight of a youth who has been so delicately and daintily reared that it has not occurred to him that he can see a dark day until the experience comes to him. It bursts upon him. He has thought of the world as a great playground. Suddenly he sees it as a battlefield, his battlefield. He has thought of life as a comedy. Now it breaks upon him as a tragedy, with pain in the air he breathes and death's black cloud over it all. He is incapable of heroic action because of his astonishment. He has gone out to war with a dress suit and a rattan cane. He faints at the sight of blood. While the man who was nerved and armed for this hour sustains the shock, he lies prostrate, wondering how it happened. It did not happen. It was planned. This is what war is for, what life is for.

So it is well for a child to know what is before him. Tell him as he stands at the

opening gates of life, "Before you are pain, loss, trial, toil, hardship. Days will come when the sun shall be hid, and nights when no stars shall shine. Reverses will come, but be brave, acquit yourself like a man, so that whether vanquished or victor you may prove yourself a good soldier."

There is another figure by which life is represented, as a voyage. It has smooth seas and breakers, favorable breezes and head-winds, clear skies and black clouds. Some are inclined to say that breakers and head-winds and frowning skies prevail. It is not so; but there are times that try men's souls, hours that test the seaworthiness of the craft and the seamanship of the captain. The part of wisdom is to sing when the skies are clear and the wind is fair, and keep a brave heart and a steady hand when the storm breaks, and outride it. Joaquin Miller gives us a noble picture of Columbus on his first voyage of discovery:

" Behind him lay the gray Azores,
Behind the gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores,
Before him only shoreless seas;
The good mate said, ' Now must we pray,
For lo! the very stars are gone,
Brave Admiral, speak, what shall I say?'
' Why, say, Sail on and on!'

" Then pale and worn he kept the deck,
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night,
Of all dark nights! And then a speck—
A light! a light! a light! a light!
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.
He gained a world. He gave that world
Its grandest lesson: ' On! sail on!' "

Well, that is the lesson of the text, Sail on, in spite of adversity; faint not when adversity cometh; be strong in the day of trial, for it will come, tribulation will come. " But it comes not to some," you say; " it comes not to the favorites of fate, the dar-

lings of Providence." And who are they? Where do they live? A man was walking with a friend, along what is regarded by some as the handsomest residence street of the world, and he said, " You may think the inhabitants of these palaces are exempt from misfortune, but I know more or less of the history of all these families, and I know of none into which sorrow and trouble have not come." To the rich as well as to the poor, patrician as well as plebeian, the Word speaks, "Ye shall have tribulation."

Have you examined this word " tribulation"? It comes to us from the name of that old threshing instrument, the Roman flail, a lash of leather, tipped with iron spikes. That is the word which describes some of those experiences that scourge the bare soul, that thresh the heart until it palpitates with pain. The word of the text, " adversity," may not be so strong, but it is more inclusive; it embraces all that is or seems to be opposed to our welfare or suc-

cess. It comprehends a thousand things which, coming into our lives, cause us to lose courage, to relax effort, to faint by the way.

Our day of adversity may be a day of material reverses. There is always a possibility that even a prosperous man may fail, and there is a probability that about every ten years the commerce of the country will stagnate, and that about every twenty years there will be an alarming shrinkage of values. This ten-year experience we call hard times. The twenty-year experience we call a panic. Mr. William Walter Phelps said, just after the panic of 1873, "What causes panics is the tendency in the human heart suddenly to lose its normal trust and confidence in men." Strange, is it not, that it requires faith to keep the world of commerce on its feet? Commerce laughs at the word faith, yet the business interests of men rest on faith. If a hundred thousand people in Philadelphia

should suddenly lose faith in the security of our banks it would create a panic here that would paralyze trade and bring ruin to many a substantial institution.

Whatever may be the explanation of these periods of contracted credit and diminished circulation of money, they come, and with them come wide-spread suffering and loss. Fortunes collapse in an hour. Banks break under the strain; unable to recall immediately their loans, their doors close, and innumerable depositors, manufacturers, and merchants are forced to the wall. When a manufacturer sees the work of a lifetime come to naught; when a shopkeeper is compelled to suspend business; when a man's income is so lessened that he finds money going out at the spout faster than it comes in at the hopper, that is his day of adversity. Have you ever known what that day means? Has a fire consumed your factory in a night? Has a strike so crippled you that you were com-

pelled to cancel orders and let your looms lie idle for a season? Has an unfounded rumor shut the door of discount in your face? Has some unforeseen accident destroyed your prospects, some incident of shifting fashion left you stranded? Has the dishonesty of a partner or of a clerk robbed you of the fruit of your wisdom and labor? Then you know. You know how the mind is dazed, how the will is palsied, how sometimes even faith in God grows faint and wicked thoughts rise in the burdened brain. Suicide after failure—suicide following bankruptcy—suicide to escape poverty? Foolish! But when a man faints he is likely to think foolish and wicked thoughts, and likely not to see how foolish and wicked they are until God brings him to his senses. Many a man has confessed that there have been times when he thought of taking his own life. One such says, " The moment I caught myself meditating self-destruction I rebuked my-

self, 'Stop, coward! You are a failure, but do not publish yourself a fool.'" And in the spirit of this self-administered rebuke he sought and effected an honorable settlement with his creditors, began again to build his fortune, and before long had proved that—

> "Noble souls, through dust and heat
> Rise from disaster and defeat
> The stronger,
> And conscious still of the Divine
> Within them, lie on earth supine
> No longer."

He fainted not in the day of his adversity, and he had the help of a spirit as strong as his own, who said when reverses came, "Sell this home. It is much too large for us and it never quite suited me. After awhile we will build a house much more convenient and much more desirable than this." So, like a knight of old, whose armor had been rightly buckled on, he

won all he had lost and more, and laid it at her feet.

Our day of adversity may be a time of personal or domestic affliction. It is easy enough to bear the misfortunes of other people. It is wonderful how philosophically we can take our neighbors' calamities. But if sickness, accident, helplessness, invalidism should be our lot, it is a different thing. It requires no courage to say to a man who is laid on the shelf at forty or fifty, "Be brave; be patient." But put yourself in his place. Would you be brave and patient, submissive and serene? Would you lift your face to those about you and say, "It is God's way; His will be done"? Or would you fret and chafe and murmur and break your heart about it? I think I know some whose strength would not fail them then. There would be a struggle, it may be a wrestling, as Jacob's with the angel, then a white face wet with tears, then a prayer, then victory in that prayer

which encompasses all other prayers, " Thy Will be done."

It requires strength quite as rare and as divine to keep from fainting when the blow falls upon another, if that other be one of our own household. Years ago there was a family within the parish of a friend of mine in New York. The mother became insane and was sent to an asylum, where she remained several years. The father brooded over the sad circumstance, over the possibility that their lovely daughters might have inherited the infirmity of their mother, and in a moment of profound despondency he sought death by jumping from a Fall River steamer into the sea. It was at night, and the black waters swallowed him up. The very day the papers announced his suicide the physicians pronounced his wife cured, and she went back to her children. He fainted at the very close of his day of adversity. Oh, if he had only been brave a little longer! Over against

such a case, think of Charles Lamb. His sister, Mary, worn to extreme nervous misery by attention to needle-work and devotion to her sick mother, was stricken with an acute mania, in which she killed her mother. She was committed to an asylum, and there she might have remained all her life had Charles not pledged himself for her safe-keeping. Giving up his dreams of a home of his own, he devoted himself to his sister, became her companion, kept her in his humble apartments in her sane intervals, and when the symptoms of her malady reappeared, took her to her temporary retreat. This he did through all the years until death stilled his patient heart. Is there anything finer in all the history of men of letters? They say Charles Lamb stammered a little in his speech. One thing is certain, his spirit never faltered, his constancy never wavered, he was strong in the day of his adversity.

Every life, every common life, affords abundant opportunity for the display of courage. Was ever a man's life absolutely free from annoyance? Was ever a woman's life exempt from perplexity? Was ever a family free from emergent circumstances, demanding superior wisdom, courage, grace, magnanimity? If thou faint, then what? Then the chain parts at the moment when most depends upon it. The bridge breaks when it bears the most precious load. Our day of adversity is the day when all the future may depend upon the strength of a single hour. This is the best part of the whole lesson,—it requires a day of adversity to reveal our strength. In Browning's "Paracelsus," he writes, "I go to prove my soul." So go we all through life, to prove our souls, and to prove the efficacy of that upon which our souls have fed. We live our common lives, our uneventful lives for years, growing strong by ordinary acts

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of courage, by the exercise of little heroisms, until some day we face a crisis, and then all the stored-up potential energy of our souls asserts itself, and "time is conquered and our crown is won."

Our civil war, a generation ago, made heroes of many who otherwise would never have risen to anything like moral grandeur. Colonel Shaw, who fell in the attack on Fort Wagner, young Cushing, who blew up the Confederate ram *Albemarle,* and some of the great commanders themselves grew great in the nation's day of adversity. George William Curtis, Wendell Phillips, and men of that type, who fought on their chosen fields as bravely as any Sheridan or Meade, grew strong in the strenuous strife that preceded the Civil War, when the trumpet call of duty and danger summoned them to "scorn delights and live laborious days." Blessed is the voice that awakens us to the purpose of life—the only purpose that justifies life,

to love something more than life, to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of something superior to life.

There used to be a young man in Providence who seemed utterly indisposed to do anything to prove himself more than a mere dandy, a sort of walking fashion-plate. Because his father was rich he drifted, as so many rich men's sons do, into uselessness, apathy, atrophy of mental and moral muscle. One day his father called him into the office and said, "My son, I have lost everything. I am a poor man. You are poor. You must help yourself now. I can do nothing more for you." Then the young man went to work as any other poor man's son might have done. He had been half asleep. It took a rude shock to arouse him, but he was thoroughly awake. He developed strength and capacity. There came a time within ten years when he handed his father a check, and said, "This is what you spent on me

before I tried to do anything. The extra thousand is the interest on your investment." He lived a serious and successful life. It required a day of adversity to prove his soul.

All I have said may seem to relate only to things material. The spiritual element in strong character, however, is larger than appears. The Christian, of all men, is strong in the day of his adversity. He has meat to eat that the world knows nothing of. He feeds on hidden manna. He has access to a secret source of strength. Voices speak to him through the silence. Visions appear to him through the darkness. Poverty cannot make him poor, since all things are his. Misfortune cannot daunt him, for all things are working together for his good. Floods cannot sweep him from his feet, for invisible hands bear him up. Death cannot harm him, for death itself is slain. Not all the gloom of all black nights can blot out his stars. He walks in

light. He has fellowship with all other saints in light, and *the Blood,* THE BLOOD, THE BLOOD, cleanseth him from all sin.

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